



As recruiters struggle, Air Force seeks lift from 'Top Gun'



The U.S. Army National Guard members stand outside the Army National Guard office during training April 21, 2022 in Washington.

Associated Press

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As recruiters struggle, Air Force seeks lift from 'Top Gun'

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) —

When "Top Gun: Maverick" roared into theaters in late May, the Air Force was ready.

The smash hit movie may feature Pete "Maverick" Mitchell as a hotshot Navy aviator, but to much of the movie-going public, the distinction between Air Force and Navy fighter jets is lost. So Air Force recruiters struggling to meet their enlistment goals took boxes of free mugs and lanyards, and fanned out to movie theaters for the premiere, determined to capitalize on the jet-fueled excitement surrounding the film. These are tough times for military recruiters. With COVID-19 complicating their work and low unemployment reducing the number of potential recruits, all services are having problems finding young people who want to join and can meet the physical, mental and moral requirements.

The Army especially is struggling. On Tuesday, it said it will cut the total number of soldiers it expects to have in the force over the next two years. If those trends continue, that could present challenges as it tries to meet future national security and warfighting missions. The situation is somewhat less dire for the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. Leaders of those branches say they hope to meet or just slightly miss their recruiting goals for this year. But they say they will have to dip into their pool of delayed entry applicants, which will put them behind as they begin the next recruiting year.

So recruiters are offering bigger bonuses and other incentives to those who sign up. And they are seizing on the boost that Hollywood may offer — such as the buzz over the sequel to the 1986 hit "Top Gun."

"When the original 'Top Gun' was released, the Navy and Air Force received a pretty good recruiting bump," said Maj. Gen. Edward Thomas, head of Air Force Recruit-

ing Service. "Frankly, we hope people get excited all over again about what we do. Whether they want

said the service will have a total force of 466,400 this year, down from the expected 476,000. It could

cultural divisions over race, abortion, vaccines and other issues tear through the nation, trust in the gov-

for enlistment bonuses, but in April service leaders added another \$14 million, and in July they put in \$7 million more.

The Navy, said Walker, has also increased bonuses by about \$100 million.

It also has relaxed some restrictions to make it possible to enlist some who may not have qualified before. He said the Navy expanded its waiver policy for some prior marijuana use and for tattoos — allowing recruits to have visible ones in more places, such as the neck.

A new pilot program allows single parents with up to two children over a year old to seek a waiver to enlist as long as the recruits have someone who can care for the children in case of a deployment.

The recruiting officials also said it's crucial to increase the public's awareness of the military and the benefits available for serving. They said recruiters and all members of the military need to get out into their communities, connect with people and tell their stories. Air Force Sgt. Eric Way did just that at the Regal Cinema in Waterford, Connecticut, during the premiere of "Top Gun: Maverick." Standing in the lobby, surrounded by Air Force swag and banners, he captured the attention of a 22-year-old from Old Lyme, who later told him the movie convinced him that he should enlist.

Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Gervacio Maldonado, who helped organize the New England recruiting campaign centered on the movie's premiere, said recruiters spoke to the young man before the film and gave him social media information to contact them later.

It worked. The man has already done his first interview.

Maldonado said the man later told a recruiter that he had been debating the enlistment idea for some time and said that "after watching the movie, that was my tipping point and I want to start the process." □



The recruiting team poses together at the U.S. Air Force recruiting tent prior to a NASCAR race at the New Hampshire Motor Speedway, Sunday, July 17, 2022, in Loudon, N.H.

Associated Press

to aim high or fly Navy, we just want them to come join us. We want them to be excited about military service."

The Air Force said it usually goes into each year with about 25% of its recruiting goal already locked in, but this year will have about half of that. The Navy and Marine Corps often have as much as 50% of their goals at the start of the year, but also will see their percentage slashed.

Gen. Eric Smith, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps., said the Marines are focusing more on retention than recruiting. He said the Marine Corps "will make or come very close to making" its recruiting goals this year, but at the expense of the 2023 pool. And when recruits have less time to prepare before reporting to boot camp, more fail to complete their training, he said.

The situation is more dire for the Army, which a top general says faces "unprecedented challenges" in recruitments.

Gen. Joseph Martin, vice chief of staff for the Army,

end 2023 with between 445,000 and 452,000 soldiers, depending on how well recruiting and retention go.

With just 2 1/2 months to go in the budget year ending Sept. 30, the Army has met just 50% of its recruiting goal of 60,000 soldiers, and based on those trends will likely miss that goal by nearly 25% as of Oct. 1.

An array of factors has made recruiting more difficult across the services.

Two years of the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered schools and other large public events that the military relies on to meet young people face to face.

The low unemployment rate means fewer people are looking for jobs. Private companies often pay more and are more nimble in responding to a tight labor market by raising salaries. Military salaries vary widely and are determined by Congress.

Across the country, fewer people are familiar with the military. Many do not know anyone who served and do not have bases in their regions. As political and

ernment — including the military — has declined.

At the same time, only about 23% of young adults are physically, mentally and morally qualified to serve without receiving some type of waiver. Moral behavior issues include drug use, gang ties or a criminal record.

"We look at it as the toughest recruiting environment that we've had in decades," said Rear Adm. Lex Walker, who heads Navy Recruiting Command. "Companies are also offering great pay, they're offering sign-on bonuses, help with college. They're offering many of the same benefits the Navy has historically used to recruit."

One short-term solution is money. The Air Force and Navy commanders both said they had to request more money for bonuses this year as they began to see the recruiting struggle worsen.

For the first time in a decade, the Air Force approved two rounds of additional bonuses this budget year. Last October the service budgeted \$17.5 million



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Secret memo links citizenship question to apportionment

By **MIKE SCHNEIDER**
Associated Press

Trump officials tried to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census in a move experts said would benefit Republicans despite initial doubts among some in the administration that it was legal, according to an investigative report released Wednesday by a congressional oversight committee. The report offers a smoking gun of sorts — a secret memo the committee obtained after a two-year legal battle — showing that a top Trump appointee in the Commerce Department explored apportionment as a reason to include the question.

"The Committee's investigation has exposed how a group of political appointees sought to use the census to advance an ideological agenda and potentially exclude non-citizens from the apportionment count," the report released by the House Committee on Oversight and Reform said.

It has long been speculated that the Trump administration wanted the citizenship question in order to exclude people in the country illegally from apportionment numbers.

The report includes several drafts showing how the memo evolved from recognizing that doing so would likely be unconstitutional to coming up with other justifications for adding the citizenship question. The apportionment process uses state population counts gathered during the once-a-decade census to divide up the number of

congressional seats each state gets.

Experts feared a citizenship question would scare off Hispanics and immigrants from participating in the 2020 census, whether they were in the country legally or not. The citizenship question was blocked by the Supreme Court in 2019. In the high court's decision, Chief Justice John Roberts said the reason the Commerce Department had given for the citizenship question — it was needed for the Justice Department's enforcement of the Voting Rights Act — appeared to be contrived. The Commerce Department oversees the Census Bureau, which conducts the count used to determine political power and the distribution of \$1.5 trillion in federal funding each year. Then-Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross testified before the oversight committee that apportionment wasn't the reason for the citizenship question, even though the Commerce Department memo suggests otherwise, the House report said.

"I have never intentionally misled Congress or intentionally said anything incorrect under oath," Ross said during a 2019 hearing before the oversight committee.

According to the House committee report, during planning for the citizenship question, an adviser to the Commerce Department reached out to a Republican redistricting expert who had written that using citizen voting-age population instead of the total

population for the purpose of redrawing of congressional and legislative districts could be advantageous to Republicans and non-Hispanic whites.

The August 2017 memo prepared by senior political appointee James Uthmeier went to the heart of interactions by the Commerce and Justice departments to come up with a contrived reason for the citizenship question, the House report said.

An initial draft of the memo raised doubts that a citizenship question would be legal since it can only be added to the once-a-decade census if the Commerce Secretary concludes that gathering that information in survey sampling is not feasible. But a later draft removed that concern and added that the Commerce Secretary had the discretion to add a citizenship question for reasons other than apportionment.

An even later draft removed apportionment as an exception to the Commerce Secretary's discretion and added "there is nothing illegal or unconstitutional about adding a citizenship question."

An early draft of the memo also noted that using a citizenship data for apportionment was likely unconstitutional and went against 200 years of precedent, but that language also was removed in later drafts.

The Founding Fathers' "conscious choice" not to exclude people in the U.S. illegally from the count "suggests the Founders did



This Sunday, April 5, 2020, file photo, shows an envelope containing a 2020 census letter mailed to a U.S. resident in Detroit.

Associated Press

not intend to distinguish between citizens and non-citizens" for apportionment," Uthmeier wrote in the early draft.

The House report says Uthmeier researched using Voting Rights Act enforcement as a reason for the citizenship question three months before the Justice Department requested it, and hand-delivered his memo with that suggestion to the Justice Department in order to avoid a digital fingerprint.

Uthmeier, who now is chief of staff to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, didn't immediately respond to an email inquiry Wednesday.

In an effort to prevent future attempts at politicizing the census, members of the oversight committee on Wednesday debated a bill introduced by U.S. Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., that would require new questions for the head count to be vetted by Congress, prohibit a Census Bureau director from being fired without cause and limit the number of political

appointees at the Census Bureau to three.

Even though many of the Trump administration's political efforts ultimately failed, some advocates believe they did have an impact, resulting in significantly larger undercounts of most racial and ethnic minorities in the 2020 census compared to the 2010 census.

Republican lawmakers said the bill would make the Census Bureau director unaccountable and limit the ability to add important questions to the census form. They offered an amendment that would add a citizenship question to the next census and exclude people in the U.S. illegally from the apportionment count, claiming their inclusion dilutes the political power of citizens. The Fourteenth Amendment requires that all people in each U.S. state be counted for apportionment.

Committee members voted down the amendment and passed the bill Wednesday afternoon. □

Man saves 5 from house fire; jumps out window to save girl

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (AP) — An Indiana man who ran into a burning home and saved five people, including a 6-year-old girl he jumped out of a second-floor window with, says he's no hero and that the serious injuries he suffered were "all worth it." Nick Bostic, 25, of Lafayette, was driving early on July 11 in the northwestern Indiana city when he saw a house in flames. He stopped and ran inside to alert its residents.

"I slammed on the brakes, I turned the steering wheel, I did a 180. I ran into the back of the house and I was yelling for anybody. Four faces, three or four faces, came out the top," he told WLFI-TV.

An 18-year-old woman was in the home babysitting her three siblings, ages 1, 6 and 13, along with a 13-year-old friend of the 13-year-old sibling, while the four siblings' parents were out playing darts, The Washington Post reported.

Bostic said the 18-year-old was able to get three of the children out, but she told him one child was still missing, prompting him to search the smoke-filled



In this image taken from police bodycam video on July 11, 2022 and provided by the Lafayette, Ind., Police Department, Nick Bostic, 25, of Lafayette rescues a 6-year-old girl from a house fire in Lafayette, Ind.

home for that child.

"I heard a faint whine, a faint crying noise and I went down there till I found that baby," he said.

Because of the dense smoke, he said his only option was to exit through a second-floor window. Bostic punched out the glass and jumped to safety with the 6-year-old girl in his arms. He suffered multiple injuries but the girl only suffered a minor cut to her foot. Police body camera

video captured the aftermath of the jump, with Bostic backlit by the burning home and walking toward first responders, the girl in his arms.

In the video, a police officer takes the crying child while Bostic — who is winded and wheezing, with a wounded right arm and blood on his clothes — sits down on the curb, saying, "I need oxygen."

After an officer helps Bostic to a safer spot across the

street, a tourniquet is applied to his arm after he lies down in the grass. Bostic then asks, "Is the baby OK? Please tell me the baby's OK" before someone off camera assures him the child is fine.

"You did good dude, OK?" an officer tells Bostic.

Bostic, who suffered smoke inhalation in addition to his arm injury and other wounds, was airlifted to an Indianapolis hospital and discharged two days later.

He said he's not a hero, and just did what he would have wanted someone to do for him and his family if their home was on fire.

"It was all worth it. I kept reminding myself what a small sacrifice. This temporary pain ... it's so worth it," he told WLFI-TV.

A GoFundMe page set up for Bostic to help pay his hospital and medical bills had raised more than \$470,000 by Wednesday afternoon, far surpassing its \$100,000 goal.

David Barrett, the four siblings' father, told The Washington Post, that his family feels "very blessed for what Nick did."

"He's a real hero, and my daughter's a real hero for waking the kids up. I don't like to think about what might have happened if Nick hadn't shown up. I'm grateful beyond words," he said. Lafayette Fire Investigation Chief Brian Alkire told the (Lafayette) Journal & Courier that the fire started on the front porch of the home in the city about 65 miles (105 kilometers) northwest of Indianapolis. Police said the fire remains under investigation. □

Associated Press



An airplane drops fire retardant on a wildfire near Glen Rose, Texas, Wednesday, July 20, 2022.

Associated Press

By **TERRY WALLACE**
Associated Press

A two-day-old wildfire remained on the move Wednesday, with embers from burning tree crowns flying up to 200 yards, offi-

cials said.

The Chalk Mountain Fire near Glen Rose, Texas, had burned almost 10 square miles (26 square kilometers) of mostly short grass, brush and juniper as of mid-

At least 21 homes destroyed by Texas wildfires

day Wednesday, the Texas A&M Forest Service reported. Sixteen homes were destroyed and five others were damaged, said spokeswoman Alexandra Schwier.

Temperatures approaching 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43 degrees Celsius), combined with a relative humidity near 20% and 10-mph (16-kph) winds gusting to 20 mph (32kph), resisted efforts to contain the fiery spread beyond 10% containment, the Forest Service said.

"In these fuels, resistance to control is often high and makes suppression efforts challenging for firefighters," said Luke Kanclerz, a Forest Service fire analyst, in a statement.

Ninety firefighters worked

around the clock focusing on protecting structures and digging a containment line around the fire's northeastern leading edge. Airdrops of fire retardant began Wednesday morning with a special DC-10 called a very large air tanker and two MD-80s called large air tankers dropping 60,000 gallons of retardant near that leading edge by midafternoon, Schwier said.

The fire extended into Hood County from neighboring Somervell County, where County Judge Danny Chambers has issued a disaster declaration because of the possibility of evacuations. A voluntary evacuation notice was issued for the county's rural northwestern quadrant,

and a no-fly zone has been declared for the entire fire area.

The Forest Service said that 99% of the state was experiencing some level of drought Wednesday.

Crews were also fighting a fire by air and on the ground at Possum Kingdom Lake, about 70 miles (113 kilometers) west of Fort Worth. Fire crews had that two-day-old fire about 15% contained to about 500 acres (202 hectares), where at least five homes had been destroyed, according to the agency.

The agency used bulldozers to dig containment lines around the fire's leading edge. Two crew members were treated for minor heat injuries and returned to service. □

U.N. slams killings, rights abuses under Afghanistan's Taliban

By RAHIM FAIEZ

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Hundreds of people have been killed in Afghanistan since the Taliban overran the country nearly a year ago, even though security on the whole has improved since then, the United Nations said in a report Wednesday.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan also highlighted the poor situation of women and girls since the Taliban takeover and how they have been stripped of many of their human rights under Afghanistan's current rulers.

"It is beyond time for all Afghans to be able to live in peace and rebuild their lives after 20 years of armed conflict. Our monitoring reveals that despite the improved security situation since 15 August, the people of Afghanistan, in particular women and girls, are deprived of the full enjoyment of their human rights," said Markus Potzel, deputy special representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

The report said as many as 700 people have been killed and 1,400 wounded since mid-August 2021, when the Taliban overran the Afghan capital of Kabul as the United States and NATO were in the final weeks of their withdrawal from the country.

The majority of those casualties were linked to attacks by the Islamic State group's affiliate in the country, a bitter rival of the Taliban which has targeted ethnic and religious minority communities in places where they go to school, worship and go about their daily lives.

Afghanistan has seen persistent bombings and other attacks on civilians, often targeting the mainly Shiite Muslim ethnic Hazara minority. Most of the attacks have been claimed by the Islamic State group's affiliate in the country.

The report added that the Taliban have made clear their position on the rights to freedom of peaceful as-



Human Rights Chief within the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, Fiona Frazer, speaks during a news conference in Kabul, Afghanistan, Wednesday, July 20, 2022.

Associated Press

sembly, freedom of expression and freedom of opinion. They have limited dissent by cracking down on protests and curbing media freedoms, including by arbitrarily arresting journalists, protestors and civil society activists and issuing restrictions on media outlets. The report catalogued human rights violations affecting 173 journalists and media workers, 163 of which were attributed to the de facto authorities. Among these were 122 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention, 58 instances of ill-treatment, 33 instances of threats and intimidation and 12 instances of incommunicado detention.

Six journalists were also killed since August, 2021, including five by self-identified Islamic State affiliates and one by unknown perpetrators.

The right to the freedoms of peaceful assembly, expression and opinion are "necessary for the development and progression of a nation," said Fiona Frazer, the U.N.'s human rights representative in Afghanistan. "They allow meaningful debate to flourish, also benefiting those who govern by allowing them to better understand the issues and problems facing the population," she added.

The U.N. also said an amnesty for former government officials the Taliban announced last year has not been consistently upheld. Frazer said the U.N. recorded 160 extrajudicial killings and 178 arrests of former government and military officials.

The report said human rights violations must be investigated by the authorities, perpetrators held accountable, and incidents should be prevented from reoccurring in the future. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid called the U.N. report "baseless and propaganda" and its findings "not true."

Arbitrary arrests and killings are not allowed in the country and if anyone commits such crimes, they will be considered guilty and face legal action, he added.

After their takeover last year, the Taliban quickly started enforcing a sharply tougher line, harking back to similar radical measures when the Taliban last ruled the country, from 1996 to 2001.

They issued edicts requiring women to cover their faces except for their eyes in public, including women presenters on TV, and banned girls from attending school past the sixth grade.

The U.N. report added that the erosion of women's rights has been one of the most notable aspects of the de facto administration to date. Since August, women and girls have progressively had their rights to fully participate in education, the workplace and other aspects of public and daily life restricted and in many cases completely taken away.

The decision not to allow girls to return to secondary school means that a generation of girls will not complete their full 12 years of basic education, the U.N. said.

"The education and participation of women and girls in public life is fundamental to any modern society. The relegation of women and girls to the home denies Afghanistan the benefit of the significant contributions they have to offer. Education for all is not only a basic human right, it is the key to progress and development of a nation," said Potzel, the U.N. envoy.

During the previous Taliban rule in Afghanistan, they subjected women to overwhelming restrictions, banning them from education and participation in public life and requiring them to wear the all-encompassing burqa. □

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Report: Brazil authorities pay no mind to deforestation

By FABIANO MAISONNAVE
RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Environmental criminals in the Brazilian Amazon destroyed public rainforests equal the size of El Salvador over the past six years, yet the Federal Police the Brazilian version of the FBI carried out only seven operations aimed at this massive loss, according to a new study. The destruction took place in state and federal forests that are “unallocated,” meaning they do not have a designated use the way national parks and Indigenous territories do. According to official data, the Brazilian Amazon rainforest has about 580,000 square kilometers (224,000 square miles) of forests in this category, or an area almost the size of Ukraine. As Brazil has repeatedly legalized such invasions, these public forests have become the main target for criminals who illegally seize land. The study, from Igarapé Institute, a Brazilian think tank, analyzed 302 environmental crime raids carried out by the Federal Police in the Amazon between 2016



Monhire Menkragnotire, of the Kayapo indigenous community, center, surveys an area where illegal loggers opened a road to enter Menkragnotire indigenous lands, on the border with the Biological Reserve Serra do Cachimbo, top, where logging is also illegal, in Altamira, Para state, Brazil on Aug. 31, 2019.

and 2021. Only 2% targeted people illegally seizing undesignated public lands. The report says the lack of enforcement likely stems from the weak legal protection of these areas, in other words, the same problem that draws the illegal activity. Environmentalists have long pressed the federal government to turn

these unallocated public forests into protected areas. Since Brazil's return to democratic rule in 1985 after two decades of military rule, most successive governments have made moves to extend the legal protection, and today about 47% of the Amazon lies within protected areas, according to official data.

Far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, however, has repeatedly said the country has too many protected areas and stalled this decades-long policy. In 2016, some 2240 square kilometers (865 square miles) of unallocated public land were illegally deforested. Last year, it reached almost double that amount.

Associated Press

Over six years, the accumulated loss has reached some 18,500 square kilometers (7,100 square miles), according to Amazon Environmental Research Institute, or IPAM, based on official data. Deforestation is increasingly taking place on these lands in particular. In 2016, they made up 31% of all illegally-felled forest. Last year, they reached 36%. Almost half of Brazil's climate pollution comes from deforestation, according to an annual study from the Brazilian nonprofit network Climate Observatory. The destruction is so vast that the eastern Amazon has ceased to be a carbon sink, or absorber, for the Earth and has converted into a carbon source, according to a study published in 2021 in the journal Nature. Igarapé divides environmental crime in the Amazon into four major illicit or tainted activities: theft of public land; illegal logging; illegal mining; and deforestation linked to agriculture and cattle farming. □

Amnesty Intl says Myanmar army has laid landmines in Kayah

BANGKOK (AP) — Myanmar's military has laid landmines that have killed and injured people in and around villages in Kayah, a conflict-affected region near the border with Thailand, Amnesty International said Wednesday.

The human rights groups said its researchers who visited the region found that landmines laid around people's homes and churches have killed at least 20 people and maimed many other civilians. The researchers inter-

viewed villagers in an area where the army has been fighting ethnic Karenni armed groups after the military seized power from Myanmar's elected government in February 2021. Various international agreements including the 1997 Ottawa Convention ban the use of antipersonnel mines with the intention of eliminating weapons that have killed and maimed thousands of people around the world, often long after hostilities have ended. “The Myanmar military's use of landmines is abhorrent and cruel. At a time when the world has overwhelmingly banned these inherently indiscriminate weapons, the military has placed them in people's yards, homes, and even stairwells, as well as around a church,” Matt Wells, Am-

nesty International's Crisis Response deputy director for thematic issues, said in a statement. Amnesty's report said landmines have been deployed in at least 20 villages in Kayah. The report backed earlier allegations made by ethnic groups. The Karenni Human Rights Group earlier this month also accused army forces of planting landmines in villages and settlements in Kayah state. Last month, the United Nations Children's Fund reported that landmines and unexploded ordnance had maimed or killed children in many regions of the country, with the largest number of casualties in Shan state in northeastern Myanmar. Apart from the immediate danger, planting landmines can prevent people who flee violence from re-

turning to their homes and fields, Amnesty International noted. It said that ethnic armed groups were warning residents to be aware of the risks. “The military appears to be systematically laying landmines near where it is based as well as in areas from which it retreats,” it said. Myanmar has been mired in violence and civil unrest since the military ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, triggering widespread peaceful protests that were put down with lethal force by the army and police. The nonviolent opposition has since turned into armed resistance, and the country has slipped into what some U.N. experts characterize as a civil war. □



This photo taken in June/July 2022 and provided by Amnesty International shows the St. Matthew's Church at Daw Ngay Khu village in Kayah state, eastern Myanmar.

Associated Press

Stimami Sterilisami Foundation spayed and neutered 20,000 cats and dogs

EAGLE BEACH – Between 2016 and 2022, the Stimami Sterilisami Foundation subsidized 30,000 sterilizations for cats and dogs with its national spay and neuter campaign. Aruba has a big problem with dogs and cats on the streets who suffer hunger, disease and abuse. To mitigate and prevent this, Stimami Sterilisami offers a subsidy which reduces the cost of sterilization and makes it more accessible for the community. Worldwide, sterilization is proved to be the most compassionate and effective way to reduce the population of stray animals.

Stimami Sterilisami Foundation thanks Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Aruba

Tourism Authority, Tourism Product Enhancement Fund, One Love Foundation, Aruba Bank, Setar NV, Ewald Biemans, guests of Bucuti and local residents for their generous contributions and support. They also thank the veterinarians at Veterinary Specialty Hospital (VSH) who gave Stimami Sterilisami Foundation a special discount. Now with the subsidy from Stimami Sterilisami and the discount provided by VSH, the cost for spay and neutering was reduced around 50% to 66% compared to what it was in 2021.

More good news regarding sterilization

Stimami Sterilisami is assisting VSH in acquiring dif-

ferent medical products which they need. VSH is also in the process of hiring more veterinarians in order to be able to handle more surgeries daily.

"Even though 30,000 sterilizations is an amazing achievement, we still see a lot of abandoned pets on the streets. That's why we must continue spaying and neutering as many cats and dogs as possible, while we continue asking each pet owner to be responsible, and for our Police Force to take action", Ewald Biemans, president of Stimami Sterilisami, explains. "We are extremely thankful to each organization and person who contributed to our cause. We



call on our entire community to please sterilize your pets on time and register as soon as possible."

Stimami Sterilisami Foundation is a non-profit organization that uses 100% of all donations to offer a partial subsidy for the procedure of sterilization both for the general public and volunteer organizations that take care of stray animals. The organization's books are

open and audited regularly in order to provide total transparency regarding the use of funds.

To those who want to contribute to this great cause, donations can be made directly to Stimami Sterilisami Foundation:

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Prime minister met with trade unions

After meeting last week with public sector and semi-public sector unions regarding the situation between Aruba and the Netherlands, prime minister Evelyn Wever-Croes invited trade unions also for a meeting.

Wever-Croes expressed in a press release that she is glad and appreciates that all the invited unions attended the meeting, and is also happy with the valuable input she received from each of them.

During the meeting they discussed the topic of the advice from CAft for an instruction [CAft is the financial supervision authority, which recommended the Kingdom government to issue a binding instruction to the local government regarding the 2022 budget]. They also discussed the payment of 5% back to employees

in the public sector after some of their benefits were reduced during the pandemic; liquidity support, and finances. The trade unions brought their concerns forward, among others, the timing for a fiscal reform seeing the inflationary effect.

"I have noted many of the recommendations provided to us, and we will address these at the Council of Minister shortly, and I believe that we are all on the same page. Aruba is going through critical, difficult moments, and to increase taxes alone is not something that is going to help us through the problems our country is currently in." The prime minister highlighted that in this, the trade unions and Government are on the same page and this is helpful for when she deliberates with the Netherlands she can put everything in context.



According to Wever-Croes it was a good meeting and she appreciates all input and recommendations which she received from each trade union. When she comes back from the Netherlands, where she went to deliberate with the Kingdom government, she will organize another meeting to follow-up on these topics, she said.

"Aruba is still going through difficulty, but there's still more to come. We see that tourism is developing sublimely, which will help the economy. When we arrive back to economic levels like before the pandemic, we will see also that Aruba's public finances will also be better. But the government and trade unions must do it together. That's why I appreciate all their input brought forward during the meeting", premier Wever-Croes said.



Bowls Noodle Bar invites you to a Happy Hour with a unique flavor



Bowls Noodle Bar recently opened at their new location at The Village, near the High Rise Hotels. To celebrate, they are launching their new Happy Hour from 9pm to 11pm every day.

Before the pandemic, Bowls Noodle Bar opened at the Hyatt by the airport, and was in the process of opening a second location at The Village when the pandemic hit. Due to the consequences of the pandemic, they decided to close the restaurant by the airport and open their new location at The Village. Their new location has been open for about six months to great results.

At The Village, night time is the best time. This is why they are now offering a daily Happy Hour, from 9pm to 11pm. It includes \$3 beer and \$5 cocktails.

and the oil, and these are very important for the traditional Japanese soups. At Bowls Noodle Bar, they have a wide variety of flavors to cater to every taste, like the famous Pork Chashu. It comes with fresh ramen noodles, and it's the pride of Bowls Noodle Bar. Chef Warren says that the broth for this soup takes two to three days to make, and is made in-house, with fresh and delicious ingredients. They also cater to vegetarians and vegans, with various options on the menu like tofu mushroom soup, vegetable gyoza, wonton, and fresh kimchi fermented at the restaurant.

The wok concept also allows you to create your own unique dish, choosing your base, protein, vegetables and sauce.

Origin

The founders of Bowls Noodle Bar, Dexter Moreno and his partner Lai, opened their first location on Curaçao. They traveled to Japan to study Japanese Cuisine, and they fell in love with Japanese soup. Lai's parents are Chinese, and this is the start of the Asian-fusion flavors that are both surprising and delectable, combining Japanese, Chinese and even some Korean cuisine. Chef Warren was trained in these traditional flavors by the founders themselves.

They came to Aruba where Dexter approached some ex-colleagues in the industry to open a location on the island, and with a local team, opened Bowls Noodle Bar Aruba with a more extensive menu.



Their cocktails are made in-house with a unique fusion of Asian flavors, for example, the popular purple Ube Mojito, with the flavor of traditional Ube, a Japanese dessert; the Blue Samurai with ginger flavor; and the refreshing Fruity Blossoms, with a flavor encompassing the Sakura, the famous Japanese Cherry Blossoms. You can try all these for only \$5 each during Happy Hour.

Fusion is at the core of the unique flavors of Bowls Noodle Bar, and this is expressed beautifully in their traditional Japanese soups. They are the only restaurant in Aruba that has most of the noodles traditionally used, Udon, Ramen, and Rice noodles. Ramen noodles, served fresh, are a surprising flavor for those who are used to dried ramen noodles. They also have Jasmine rice for the rice bowls.

Their authentic soups are the highlight and star. Chef Warren explains that there are four main components to the soup: the broth, the noodles, tare,

Opening hours are Monday to Thursday 5pm – 11:30pm; Friday and Saturday 5pm – 12pm; and Sunday 5pm – 11:30pm. Come visit for great atmosphere, delicious flavors, and a Happy Hour to remember! ☐





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Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino



Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority honored the Goodwill Ambassador of Aruba as a token of appreciation for visiting the island for more than 20 years.

The honoree was **German Sandoval** resident of Bucaramanga, Colombia.

Ms. Marouska Heyliger representing the Aruba Tourism Authority and members of La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino bestowed the certificate of the Ambassadors and handed some presents to the honoree and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their vacation destination and as their home away from home for so many years on behalf of the Government of Aruba.

The top reason for returning provided by the honoree was "The beautiful beach! The best beach in

the world". As well as The friendliness of the Aruban people.

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home & the beloved staff are like my family. Aruba is the picture perfect place to be." □



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Consumer Price Index, base period June 2019 - June 2022

The Central Bureau of Statistics presents the most important findings for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the month of June 2022

Consumer Price Index for the month of June 2022

The CPI for June 2022 is 103.26, an increase of 0.7% compared to the index of May 2022 (102.49) and accumulating an increase of 2.6% up to and including June of this year. The percentage change of the CPI over the last twelve (12) months (June 2021 to June 2022) is 5.3, an increase of 4.3 percentage points (ppts) compared to the percentage change for the same period of last year (1.0%). The period average (last 24 months) percentage change of the CPI for the periods June 2020 to June

2021 and June 2021 to June 2022 is 3.4%, an increase of 5.2 ppts compared to the period average percentage change over the periods June 2019 to June 2020 and June 2020 to June 2021 (-1.8%). During this month, seven (7) of the twelve (12) sectors registered increases in prices. The increases that had the greatest influence on the CPI were registered for the "Transport" (4.5%), "Household operation" (2.6%) and "Food and non-alcoholic beverages" (1.2%) sectors, which contributed with an effect of 0.67, 0.24 and 0.13 ppts, respectively. The increases in the remaining sectors had an effect of 0.10 ppts on the CPI of June 2022.

Aforementioned increases were partially offset mainly by decreases in the indices for the "Clothing and footwear" (-7.3%) and "Recreation and culture" (-1.6%) sectors, causing an effect of -0.19 and -0.15 ppts, respectively. The decreases in the remaining sectors had an effect of -0.05 ppts on the CPI of June 2022. The increase in the "Transport" sector was mainly due to an increase in the category "Operation of personal transport equipment" (6.9%), which contributed to an effect of 0.65. The increase in the "Household operation" sector was mainly due to an increase in the category "Furniture, furnishings, carpets and other floor coverings" (14.2%), which contributed to an effect of 0.14 ppts. The increase in the "Food and non-alcoholic beverages" sector was mainly due to an increase in the category "Food" (1.2%), which contributed to an effect of 0.12 ppts.

The decrease in the "Clothing and footwear" sector was mainly due to a decrease in the category "Clothing" (-7.2%), which contributed to an effect of -0.15 ppts. The decrease in the "Recreation and culture" sector was mainly due to a decrease in the category "Holidays" (-2.8%), which contributed to an effect of -0.08 ppts.

Consumption basket

Table 3 Categories with the greatest positive effect on the CPI of June 2022

Category	Monthly change	Effect
Operation of personal transport equipment	6.9	0.65
Furniture, furnishings, carpets and other floor coverings	14.2	0.14
Food	1.2	0.12
Maintenance and repair of the dwelling	1.0	0.05

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Aruba

The consumption basket of the CPI consists of 408 goods and services. Compared to May 2022, 44.4% of these products had an increase in price, causing an effect of 1.40 ppts, while 39.5% showed a decrease, contributing to an effect of -0.65 ppts and the remaining 16.2% had no change in price. The prices of goods increased by 1.3% and caused an influence of 0.75 ppts. The prices of services were practically unchanged and had an insignificant contribution on the CPI of June 2022.

Core inflation

The CPIC (core inflation) - CPI excluding the effect of energy and food - was 2.0% in June 2022. The energy index - which consists of the products: electricity, water, gasoline and diesel - was 9.0%. The food index showed an increase of 5.1%.

Subsistence level

The subsistence level for a household consisting of two (2) adults and two (2) children (aged 0-14 years) in June 2022 is Afl. 5,070, an increase of Afl. 300 compared to June 2021 (Afl. 4,770). The subsistence level for a single adult household is Afl. 2,414, an increase of Afl. 143 compared to June 2021 (Afl. 2,271).

Change in prices of crude oil, utilities, gasoline and diesel in June 2022

The prices of utilities (electricity and water), gasoline and diesel are for the greater part determined by international crude oil prices. In June 2022 the average price per barrel of crude oil (US\$ 115.29) had an increase of US\$ 5.98 (5.5%) compared to May 2022 (US\$ 109.31).

The prices of electricity and water did not change compared to May 2022. Subsequently, the average electricity price per household remained at Afl. 240.09, while the average price of water per household remained at Afl. 137.05.

In June 2022 the price of gasoline registered an increase of Afl. 32.20 cents (11.1%) and had an effect of 0.65 ppts on the CPI. The price of diesel registered an increase of Afl. 1.30 cents (0.4%) and had an insignificant

Change in prices of Food & catering services in June 2022

The "Food & catering services" index showed an increase of 1.0% in June 2022, after an increase of 1.1% in May 2022. The index for "Food at home" showed an increase of 1.2% in June, as seven (7) of the eleven (11) "Food at home" indices increased in June 2022. The "Meat" index registered the largest increase (3.6%) in

June 2022. Furthermore, other significant increases were posted in the indices for "Oils and fats" (3.1%), "Bread and cereals" (1.1%), "Non-alcoholic beverages" (0.9%) and "Food products n.e.c." (0.8%).

The largest decrease was registered in the index of "Potatoes and other tubers" (-2.2%). Over the last twelve (12) months, the "Food & catering services" has increased by 9.5%. The "Food at home" index showed an increase of 11.1%, where all of the "Food at home" indices increased over the last year. The "Oils and fats" index increased by 24.3%, the largest increase among the "Food at home" food groups. Furthermore, other significant increases were posted in the indices for "Meat" (13.7%), "Fruit"

In June 2022, "Food at home" and "Food away from home" as a group showed an increase in price of 1.0% compared to May 2022, and had an influence of 0.16 ppts on the CPI, while the remaining goods and services, as a group, experienced an increase in price of 0.7%, causing an effect of 0.59 ppts on the CPI.

The subsistence level in June 2022

The subsistence level is the minimum level of income which is perceived necessary to achieve an adequate standard of living in a given country. The subsistence level is usually determined by estimating the cost of all the essential resources that an average adult consumes in one month or year. This is commonly called a basic needs index, and varies according to the price of food, clothing, housing, transport and other items in the "basket".

Equivalent scales are used to adjust the assumed standard of living, of households of different sizes and composition. The scale assigns a weight of 1.0 for the first adult and 0.5 for each additional adult in the household (aged 15+) and a weight of 0.3 for each child (aged 0-14 years). The subsistence level is based on figures of the report "Bestaansminimum 2010" published by the CBS in December 2010 and is monthly updated for inflation using the monthly CPI. The reference unit used in this report is a household consisting of two (2) adults and two (2) children (aged 0-14 years).

In June 2022 the monthly subsistence level for a household consisting of two (2) adults and two (2) children (aged 0-14 years) (Afl. 5,070) showed an increase of Afl. 300 compared to June 2021 (Afl. 4,770) and was mainly caused by an increase of Afl. 300 in the sector "Food and non-alcoholic

In June 2022, the monthly subsistence level for a single adult household is Afl. 2,414, which represents an income deficit of Afl. 599, an increase of Afl. 143 compared to the deficit observed one year ago (Afl. 456). This deficit is the highest registered over a period of six (6) years for the month June. □

Table 4 Categories with the greatest negative effect on the CPI of June 2022

Category	Monthly change	Effect
Clothing	-7.2	-0.15
Holidays	-2.8	-0.08
Medical products, appliances and equipment	-3.2	-0.05
Footwear	-7.9	-0.04
Newspapers, books and stationery	-10.6	0.04

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Aruba

Moises Fernandez from Association Friends of Colombia “Colombia is the nation of my birth and Aruba is my second home”

Aruba is known as an island that is home to many migrants, be it from other continents or the Latin American region. Yesterday, July 20, in commemoration of 212 years of Independence Day of the Republic of Colombia, our reporter spoke with Moises Fernandez, president of ASOCOL Aruba.

Fernandez told us that he arrived in Aruba from Barranquilla around 32 years ago, when the armed conflict in Colombia became worse in the entire region related to drug trafficking. He came to explore a change in lifestyle together with his wife and two sons. “I had to think about the safety of my two sons. My father also migrated with my family to the United States because he was being extorted for some properties which we had in Sierra Nevada in Santa Marta”, he says.

His first anecdote in Aruba was something traumatic: the person who was supposed to pick him up from the airport when he arrived in Aruba for the first time never showed up. It turned out that he was hospitalized. But for Fernandez, starting a new life in Aruba didn't turn out too difficult, ‘everything is a process of work, discipline and constancy’.

Regarding the process of integration, he says that he started working in a construction company and then he went to work in another company to do with air conditioning, which was Fernandez's specialty. From there the whole panorama changed, and he managed to bring his family to Aruba, where he grew professionally and socially, adapting to the local culture.

He points out that Aruba is not the same island as it was 30 years ago. Back then, there didn't exist a big group of Colombian nationals, there wasn't



much unity or a place to gather amongst people of the same nationality. “There was a small store owned by a countryman in Playa (city centre) where we used the place on Saturdays and Sundays to meet each other, but there wasn't much communica-

tion like there is today”, he says.

As president of ASOCOL Aruba, Fernandez expressed that he assumed this task four years ago, and they have been working for the community, to better some aspects and help those who are in a

more vulnerable position.

Regarding the most difficult moments for migrants in Aruba, both from Colombia and from other countries, it was in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic arrived in Aruba. “It was a very delicate situation for

all of us. As I always say, we Colombians are resilient people, we adapt to any circumstance or when we are confronting a difficult situation.” He also points out that Colombians in Aruba lack an institutional organization “which will gather them, defend them and guide them with tools so that their stay in Aruba is easier.”

He feels that he is a very blessed and privileged person, because he integrated into the island very fast. He says that he started speaking Papiamentu within four months. “I understood that I had to be with the local community in order to grow. This made it easier for me to integrate into the community – also because Aruba is a very special place, when you give respect, you receive respect.”

As a professional, he says that in Colombia he carried himself with a certain work ethic, which in Aruba opened many doors for him. That time it was also the case that there weren't many people who were working in his area of expertise, something with which he received an important place and acceptance within the Aruban community. He also told us that two local families provided him with the support he needed and treated him like their own family.

For Fernandez, “Colombia is my homeland and will always be so, it is the place where I was born, grew and learned, the place where I became what I am today. And Aruba is my homeland who adopted me and allowed me to grow. It is also the place that allowed me to represent it with great honor in international sport. For me, Aruba is my second homeland, my second home, where my children grew up. Here I have everything, the fruits of my labor and my effort together with my family. It is my second nation.” □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

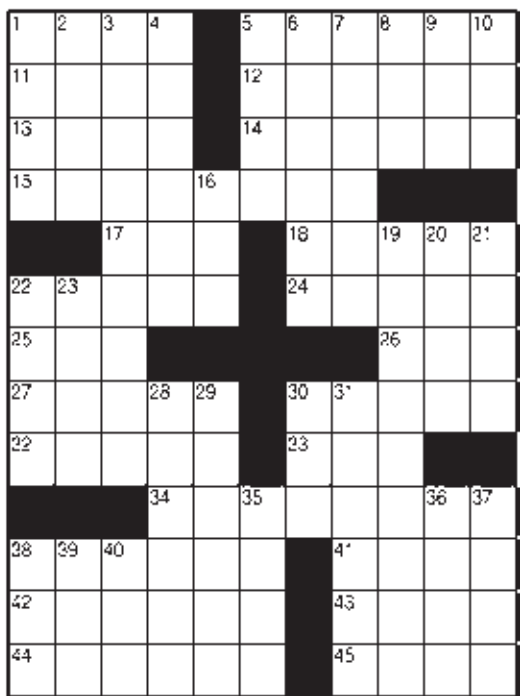
ACROSS 44 Ticks off
1 Cats' quarries
5 Made amends
11 Revered one
12 Famed isthmus
13 Transmit
14 Trample
15 They're not too risky
17 Much of N. Amer.
18 Impudent
22 Rash
24 Spine-tingling
25 Here, in France
26 "Not — dare!"
27 Vault inter-section
30 Career soldier
32 Thus
33 Outback bird
34 Lunar events
38 White Rabbit's cry
41 Opera set in Egypt
42 Carter's successor
43 Beef cut

DOWN
1 Fall short of
2 Concept
3 Puzzlement
4 Senior
5 Church area
6 Be a snitch
7 Infant outfit
8 Catch some z's
9 Moody music
10 Dapper fellow
16 Inlet



Yesterday's answer

19 Abundance
20 Freshener scent
21 Calendar span
22 In the clouds
23 Plot unit
28 Glacial period
29 Sweet drink
30 Island souvenir
31 Gazelle's cousin
35 Eye part
36 Fix a story
37 Rational
38 Nest egg acct.
39 Fellows
40 Fall back



7-21

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-21

CRYPTOQUOTE

LNYP ZXOCKL BWLZ UGC'Z TP

IPLUHOTPI. GCI LZPMMOCK

NCZN ZXP YNNC DGL NCP NJ

ZXPY. — TWAA GVHOC

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THAT'S ONE SMALL STEP FOR A MAN, ONE GIANT LEAP FOR MANKIND. NEIL ARMSTRONG

5 ways to protect yourself from Medicare fraud

By ALEX ROSENBERG of NerdWallet

Medicare fraud is big business, and like most businesses, it has adapted to the new environment of the COVID-19 pandemic. "The public health emergency created an opportunity for fraudsters to modify and repurpose existing schemes," a spokesperson for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, or CMS, said in an email. CMS has seen bad actors take advantage of wider demand for telehealth, COVID-19 testing and vaccines as avenues for identity theft and fraudulent billing.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General, or HHS-OIG, investigates fraud, waste and abuse in federal health care programs, including Medicare. Nearly 9,000 calls came into its fraud hotline each month, on average, from April through September 2021, according to HHS-OIG's Spring 2022 report to Congress.

Calling a fraud hotline is one of several actions Medicare beneficiaries can take to protect themselves. Here are five tips to help you avoid, detect and report Medicare fraud.

1. PROTECT YOUR MEDICARE NUMBER

In the wrong hands, your Medicare number could be used to steal your identity or submit fraudulent medical bills.

"Our top tip is to guard your Medicare number just like your Social Security (number) and credit cards," the CMS spokesperson said. "You should only share your Medicare



Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Center medical professionals Tameiki Lee, right, Vanessa Cage, left, Marstonya Butler, second from right, and Frances Triplett, second from left, confer prior to dispensing Moderna vaccinations at a inoculation station next to Jackson State University in Jackson, Miss., Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

Associated Press

number with trusted health care providers or verified COVID-19 vaccine administrators."

Unexpected callers or visitors who ask for your Medicare information are suspicious, especially if they claim to work for Medicare. According to CMS, Medicare will never visit you at home, and a Medicare representative would ask for your Medicare number by phone only if you've given permission in advance.

2. BEWARE OF FREE GIFTS

Fraudsters might try to get your information by offering you something for free in exchange. If you're asked to provide your medical or financial information and promised a supposedly free gift or service, "that's something to question, or at least run by a medical professional that you trust," says Isaac Bledsoe, an HHS-OIG criminal investigator.

Common examples of free offers might include COVID-19 tests, genetic testing

services, or durable medical equipment like walkers or braces.

3. DON'T GET TALKED INTO UNNECESSARY CARE

Some schemes involve billing for expensive services that you might not need. For example, unscrupulous COVID-19 testing sites might add on unnecessary respiratory pathogen panels that can cost upwards of \$500. That's according to a January 2022 white paper by the Healthcare Fraud Prevention Partnership, a public-private anti-fraud group.

If you're not certain, check with a trusted health care provider to confirm whether a service is necessary and what it might cost.

4. REVIEW YOUR HEALTH CARE DOCUMENTS

Medicare sends statements to explain what you were billed for, how much Medicare approved and paid for services, and the maximum amount you may owe to health care providers. Watch for any unexpected items or charges on these statements. To help you keep track of everything, you can request a free "My Health Care Tracker" from your state's Senior Medicare Patrol, or SMP. SMPs are grant-funded projects that provide resources and counseling to help counter Medicare fraud, errors and abuse. □

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Officials: Starvation threat not over for Florida manatees

By CURT ANDERSON

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP)

— Fewer manatee deaths have been recorded so far this year in Florida compared to the record-setting numbers in 2021, but wildlife officials cautioned Wednesday that chronic starvation remains a dire and ongoing threat to the marine mammals. Between Jan. 1 and July 15, about 631 manatee deaths have been confirmed by the Florida Fish and Wild-

life Conservation Commission. That compares with 864 during the same period last year, when a record number of manatees died mainly from a lack of seagrass food, which was decimated by water pollution. The five-year average of manatee deaths in that time frame is 481.

Despite some glimmers of hope, wildlife officials said during a news conference Wednesday that manatees continue to face dwindling food options and many survivors have been severely weakened by malnutrition, which leaves them more vulnerable once cold weather sets in.

How manatees fare this summer when more food is available will determine how they survive in winter, said Martine de Wit, a veterinarian overseeing necropsies and coordinating rescues of ill manatees for the state wildlife commission. □

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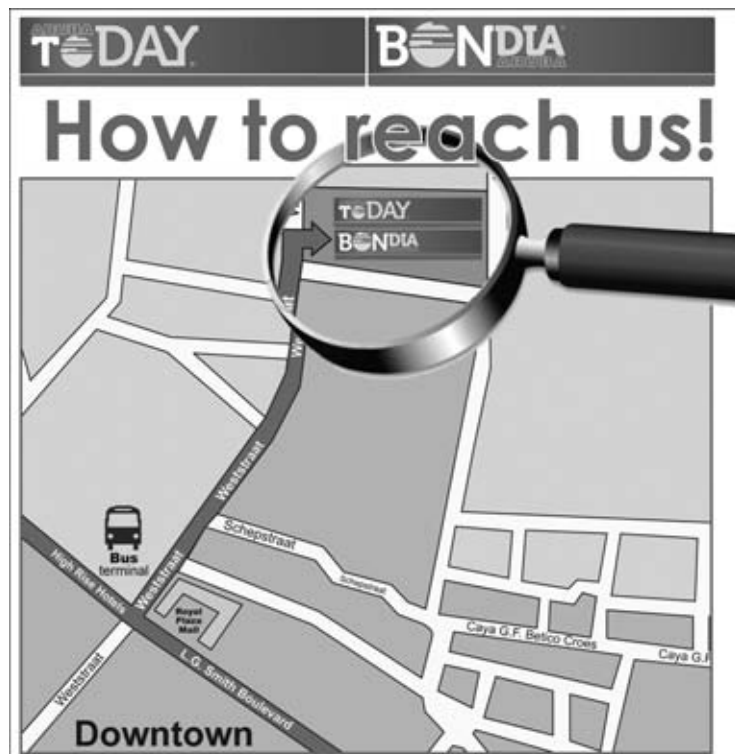
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Soledad O'Brien show makes impression in off-hours time slot

By DAVID BAUDER

AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — You've got to wake up early on a weekend to catch Soledad O'Brien.

Say 4:30 a.m. Saturday in Chicago. Or 5 a.m. on Sunday in New York and Houston. It's 6:30 a.m. Saturday in Washington, D.C. almost sleep-in territory.

Those are some of the time slots for "Matter of Fact," the news show she anchors that has overcome those hours over seven years to establish itself over in the syndicated market. Produced by Hearst Television, "Matter of Fact" is available in 181 markets covering 95 percent of the country. "Matter of Fact" averages about 1.08 million viewers each weekend, roughly half the audience for broadcast network panel shows like "Meet the Press" or "This Week," according to Nielsen company, which measures ratings. That's down from a pandemic- and election-aided peak of 1.2 million in 2020, but double what it was at the show's start in 2015.

That's notable given that the program has no con-



Soledad O'Brien, left, appears with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor on the Hearst Media Production Group-produced program "Matter of Fact with Soledad O'Brien."

Associated Press

sistent time slot all over the country and, in some places, literally airs in the middle of the night.

O'Brien, formerly of CNN, also contributes to HBO's "Real Sports," but most of her time now is spent running her own production company. Her HBO docu-series "Black and Missing" won a Film Independent Spirit Award, and a doc about Rosa Parks recently premiered at the Tribeca film festival.

O'Brien wanted to keep a hand in onscreen television work and, when approached for "Matter of Fact," met with executive producer Rita Aleman and found that they had similar ideas.

"The mission of the show was always to share voices as diverse as America, slices of life that people should see in order to understand how issues play out across the country," Aleman said. Hearst was looking to de-

sign a show that included voices not normally heard on network panel shows, where occasionally the same government official will appear on two or three on the same weekend, said Emerson Coleman, Hearst's senior vice president of programming, who developed the show.

There was also a desire to turn down the volume. The inherent conflict of political shows "makes for good TV, but we have a different ap-

proach," Coleman said.

"I found that I was very underwhelmed by the interviews we were getting," O'Brien said. "People were talking about policy but not really talking about human beings. So we decided to cut out the middle man."

To a large extent, "Matter of Fact" is a reported show. Reporter Jessica Gomez visited a hospital in Texas' Titus County for a story on rural health care. The show profiled Emmanuel Pratt, a MacArthur Foundation fellow who runs an urban redevelopment agency that uses agriculture and carpentry to spur revivals.

O'Brien refers to the show as a "teaching hospital" of news.

"I don't know that you can go wrong in elevating people who've been doing good work in difficult circumstances and giving them a platform," she said. "I think we don't do it enough."

The effort to get closer to communities where "Matter of Fact" is broadcast is reflected in a just-completed project that became more involved as it was on-going. □

No charges for 'Late Show' crew arrested on Capitol Hill



Robert Smigel, creator, executive producer and voice of "Triumph the Insult Comic Dog," poses with the puppet during the Television Critics Association 2016 Summer Press Tour at the Beverly Hilton on Aug. 5, 2016, in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Associated Press

By MICHAEL BALSAMO

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal prosecutors said Monday they have declined to bring charges against nine

people associated with CBS' "Late Show with Stephen Colbert" who were arrested in a building in the U.S. Capitol complex last month.

The decision, made by the U.S. attorney's office in Washington, comes after prosecutors determined they "cannot move forward" with the misdemeanor charges against the nine people arrested June 16 in the Longworth House Office Building. The incident followed the third public hearing by the House panel investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection. A spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office said it was not probable a conviction could be obtained and sustained given that the nine arrested had been invited and that their escorts had never asked them to leave the building.

Though Capitol Police have refused to provide the names of those who were arrested, a person familiar with the matter provided

The Associated Press with a list of nine people who had been stopped by Capitol Police.

They included several producers, along with comedian and writer Robert Smigel, the voice behind Triumph the Insult Comic Dog. Capitol Police officials said Monday they respect the decision made by the U.S. attorney's office.

Police said the group was arrested on unlawful entry charges "because members of the group had been told several times before they entered the Congressional buildings that they had to remain with a staff escort inside the buildings and they failed to do so." Prosecutors said the group

had been invited by congressional staffers and had never been asked to leave by the staff members who had invited them. The U.S. attorney's office said some people in the group of nine had been told by police that they were supposed to have an escort.

"The Office would be required to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that these invited guests were guilty of the crime of unlawful entry because their escort chose to leave them unattended," said Bill Miller, a spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office. "We do not believe it is probable that the Office would be able to obtain and sustain convictions on these charges." □



Golf Hall of Fame to move back to Pinehurst at new site

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP Golf Writer

The World Golf Hall of Fame is leaving Florida and returning to North Carolina, where it will be part of the USGA's campus at Pinehurst and stage two induction ceremonies during the U.S. Open weeks in 2024 and 2029.

The move will involve relocating some of the artifacts that have been on display at the World Golf Hall of Fame in St. Augustine, Florida, which opened in 1998. The visitor experience also will include the USGA museum and its vast library.

The USGA, which has its main headquarters in Far Hills, New Jersey, began last month to build a "Golf House Pinehurst" with golf equipment testing as the centerpiece.

Jay Monahan, the PGA Tour commissioner who chairs the World Golf Foundation, said Wednesday's announcement would "cement the long-term relevance and viability" of the Hall of Fame and expand on the partnership with the USGA.

"Both organizations are committed to prioritizing the preservation of golf history, which will serve fans well in the years to come," Monahan said.



LPGA Tour Commissioner Carolyn Bivens, left, and Hall of Fame golfer Nancy Lopez embrace during Hall of Fame induction ceremonies at the World Golf Hall of Fame in St. Augustine, Fla., Monday, Nov. 12, 2007.

Tiger Woods was part of the last induction class in March at PGA Tour headquarters in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. In recent years, induction ceremonies were links to big events — St. Andrews during the 2015 British Open, Liberty National during the 2017 Presidents Cup, Pebble Beach in 2019 during the U.S. Open.

It was not immediately decided if there would be other induction ceremonies between the 2024 U.S. Open and the 2029 U.S. Open and U.S. Women's Open in Pinehurst.

"There's no better connection to golf's past, present and future than Pinehurst, and no organization that works harder than the USGA to preserve the history of this great game," said Mike Whan, CEO of the USGA. "It just makes sense. And together with the Hall of Fame, we're more committed than ever to delivering experiences that build even deeper connections between golf fans and those that have truly led the way in this great game." Golf long has struggled to put together a Hall of Fame

that would be in line with Cooperstown (baseball) and Canton (pro football), in part because its roots involve more than one organization.

The Hall of Fame opened in 1974 in Pinehurst was privately operated. The PGA of America took over management in 1983 and acquired it three years later, merging its Hall of Fame that dated to 1940. The World Golf Hall of Fame brought a global aspect to golf, including the LPGA Tour.

But traffic to the World

Golf Village was slow. Attendance was more than 250,000 a year at its peak and last year dropped to about 60,000.

The World Golf Foundation's 25-year lease expires at the end of next year.

Monahan had been looking at ways to preserve golf's rich history even without the physical structure in St. Augustine, and the partnership with the USGA provides a clear path.

The USGA will be responsible for the day-to-day operations. The World Golf Foundation will continue to oversee the selection process and induction ceremony.

Along with artifacts from the World Golf Hall of Fame — such as Johnny Miller's clubs from his 63 at Oakmont in the 1973 U.S. Open and the wedge Seve Ballesteros used to win his first British Open — the shrine will include the comprehensive collection from the USGA Golf Museum and Library.

Miller and Nick Faldo were the first players to be inducted in the Florida facility in 1998.

The last induction ceremony at the World Golf Village was in 2013, a class that included Fred Couples and Colin Montgomerie. □

Associated Press

Pogacar wins Stage 17, Vingegaard moves closer to Tour title

PEYRAGUDES, France (AP)

— Tadej Pogacar claimed a third stage win as he sprinted away from Jonas Vingegaard in the punishing last climb of a grueling trek in the Pyrenees on Wednesday but failed to take significant time out of the Tour de France leader. As so often in this year's race, the pair were in a class of their own and were left fighting each other in the brutal final kilometer up to Peyragudes airstrip.

Once Pogacar's teammate Brandon McNulty — who paced his leader throughout the day through punishing ascents with an impressive effort of pure dedication — got dropped,

it was time for a final showdown in high altitude. In the steep ramp leading to the finish, Pogacar accelerated with about 300 meters left. Vingegaard countered with ease but the two-time defending champion had the final say with a final kick that helped him surge ahead and cross first, with Vingegaard on his wheel.

With just one big mountain stage left and an individual time trial before the race reaches Paris on Sunday, Vingegaard looks set for his first Tour de France win. But Pogacar still believes.

"I'm optimistic that I can still win the Tour," the 23-year-old Slovenian said. "Tomorrow is a harder stage, so

we can try again." Since his bad day in the Alps when he relinquished the yellow jersey to Vingegaard, Pogacar has been on the attack but has not managed to make up the time he lost to his rival.

The UAE-Emirates team has also been forced to cope with many withdrawals in his team. On Wednesday, Rafal Majka pulled out of the race just before the stage start because of a thigh injury. Pogacar had already seen his support unit reduced to four riders following the earlier withdrawals of George Bennett, Vegard Stake Laengen and Marc Soler.

"The way the team rode



Stage winner Slovenia's Tadej Pogacar, wearing the best young rider's white jersey, celebrates as he crosses the finish line ahead of Denmark's Jonas Vingegaard, wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, during the seventeenth stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 130 kilometers (80.8 miles) with start in Saint-Gaudens and finish in Peyragudes, France, Wednesday, July 20, 2022.

Associated Press

today with only four riders, just to take the stage win is already incredible," Pogacar said. "We can all be proud of what we

have done. Without Rafal, George, Vegard and Soler, we couldn't try more. We'll see tomorrow if there is another chance." □

Judge, Yanks on top as baseball returns from All-Star break

By JAY COHEN

AP Baseball Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Aaron Judge and the New York Yankees, Mookie Betts and the Los Angeles Dodgers, Jose Altuve and the Houston Astros — they're all just looking for more of the same. The Atlanta Braves' title defense is rolling along, and Julio Rodríguez and the Seattle Mariners are looking to crash the playoff party.

As baseball returns from the All-Star break — all packed up and ready to go after the AL's 3-2 victory at Dodger Stadium on Tuesday night — the postseason picture is quite crowded, thanks to the addition of a third wild card in each league.

The October equation can



New York Yankees Aaron Judge, left, runs in the outfield during batting practice a day before the 2022 MLB All-Star baseball game, Monday, July 18, 2022, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

change in a hurry, too. Just ask Rodríguez and the Mariners, winners of 14 in a row. Or the contenders looking at the Aug. 2 trade deadline, with Cincinnati Reds ace Luis Castillo, Chicago

Cubs catcher Willson Contreras and, yes, Washington Nationals slugger Juan Soto, all believed to be on the market to varying degrees.

Welcome back, indeed.

"We still got a long way to go," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "A lot of baseball to play."

Roberts' club is one of three teams with at least a nine-game lead in their respective divisions heading into the second half. Led by Betts and Freddie Freeman, Los Angeles is 10 games up on Manny Machado and the San Diego Padres in the NL West.

"Just a lot of good things happened in the first half for us," Freeman said.

Altuve and Houston still have a nine-game lead in the AL West, even with the win streak for Seattle. The Astros and Mariners close out their season series with seven more games this month, beginning Friday night in Seattle.

"I thought the Mariners had a good team from the very beginning, and I told everybody that then at the time, they finished extremely strong last year, and you know, you have to beat them," Houston manager Dusty Baker said. "They are not going to beat themselves."

The AL East has been the best division in baseball — every team is .500 or better, even the 46-46 Baltimore Orioles — but that hasn't affected New York very much at all. The Yankees begin the second half with a gaudy 64-28 record and a whopping 13-game lead over Tampa Bay.

While Giancarlo Stanton has delivered his usual power and Clay Holmes has been one of the game's most dominant relievers, it's Judge leading the way for the Bronx Bombers. He is batting .284 with 33 homers and 70 RBIs, joining Shohei Ohtani among the front-runners for AL MVP. "I think he continues to get better and better as a leader, which has always been, I think, a positive trait of his," New York manager Aaron Boone said. "But I would just say he's a more complete, refined, veteran player that is also in the prime of his career."

Judge and the Yankees are trying to chase down the franchise's first championship since 2009 and No. 28 overall. But there are all sorts of potential roadblocks — both nearby and further away.

The crosstown Mets are on top of the NL East, looking to hold off the Braves and take the franchise's first division title since 2015. Each of baseball's Central divisions had a mediocre first half, but Milwaukee and St. Louis have an array of stars, and Carlos Correa could power Minnesota back into the playoffs after it finished last in the AL Central in 2021.

Even the Chicago White Sox, who underperformed early on, showed some positive signs while taking three of four at the division-leading Twins in the runup to the break. □

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